

R602. Labor Commission, Adjudication.

R602-2. Adjudication of Workers' Compensation and Occupational Disease Claims.

R602-2-1. Pleadings and Discovery.

A. Definitions.

1. "Commission" means the Labor Commission.

2. "Division" means the Division of Adjudication within the Labor Commission.

3. "Application for Hearing" means the request for agency action regarding a workers' compensation claim.

4. "Supporting medical documentation" means a Summary of Medical Record or other medical report or treatment note completed by a physician that indicates the presence or absence of a medical causal connection between benefits sought and the alleged industrial injury.

5. "Authorization to Release Medical Records" is a form authorizing the injured workers' medical providers to provide medical records and other medical information to the commission or a party.

6. "Supporting documents" means supporting medical documentation, list of medical providers, Authorization to Release Medical Records and, when applicable, an Appointment of Counsel Form.

7. "Petitioner" means the person or entity who has filed an Application for Hearing.

8. "Respondent" means the person or entity against whom the Application for Hearing was filed.

9. "Discovery motion" includes a motion to compel or a motion for protective order.

B. Application for Hearing.

1. Whenever a claim for compensation benefits is denied by an employer or insurance carrier, the burden rests with the injured worker, or medical provider, to initiate agency action by filing an Application for Hearing with the Division. Applications for hearing shall include an original, notarized Authorization to Release Medical Records.

2. An employer, insurance carrier, or any other party with standing under the Workers' Compensation Act may obtain a hearing before the Adjudication Division by filing a request for agency action with the Division.

3. All Applications for Hearing shall include any available supporting medical documentation of the claim where there is a dispute over medical issues. Applications for Hearing without supporting documentation and a properly completed Authorization to Release Medical Records may not be mailed to the employer or insurance carrier for answer until the appropriate documents have been provided. In addition to respondent's answer, a respondent may file a motion to dismiss the Application for Hearing where there is no supporting medical documentation filed to demonstrate medical causation when such is at issue between the parties.

4. When an Application for Hearing with appropriate supporting documentation is filed with the Division, the Division

shall forthwith mail to the respondents a copy of the Application for Hearing, supporting documents and Notice of Formal Adjudication and Order for Answer.

5. In cases where the injured worker is represented by an attorney, a completed and signed Appointment of Counsel form shall be filed with the Application for Hearing or upon retention of the attorney.

C. Answer.

1. The respondent(s) shall have 30 days from the date of mailing of the Order for Answer, to file a written answer to the Application for Hearing.

2. The answer shall admit or deny liability for the claim and shall state the reasons liability is denied. The answer shall state all affirmative defenses with sufficient accuracy and detail that the petitioner and the Division may be fully informed of the nature and substance of the defenses asserted.

3. All answers shall include a summary of benefits which have been paid to date on the claim, designating such payments by category, i.e. medical expenses, temporary total disability, permanent partial disability, etc.

4. When liability is denied based upon medical issues, copies of all available medical reports sufficient to support the denial of liability shall be filed with the answer.

5. If the answer filed by the respondents fails to sufficiently explain the basis of the denial, fails to include available medical reports or records to support the denial, or contains affirmative defenses without sufficient factual detail to support the affirmative defense, the Division may strike the answer filed and order the respondent to file within 20 days, a new answer which conforms with the requirements of this rule.

6. All answers must state whether the respondent is willing to mediate the claim.

7. Petitioners are allowed to timely amend the Application for Hearing, and respondents are allowed to timely amend the answer, as newly discovered information becomes available that would warrant the amendment. The parties shall not amend their pleadings later than 45 days prior to the scheduled hearing without leave of the Administrative Law Judge.

8. Responses and answers to amended pleadings shall be filed within ten days of service of the amended pleading without further order of the Labor Commission.

D. Default.

1. If a respondent fails to file an answer as provided in Subsection C above, the Division may enter a default against the respondent.

2. If default is entered against a respondent, the Division may conduct any further proceedings necessary to take evidence and determine the issues raised by the Application for Hearing without the participation of the party in default pursuant to Section 63-46b-11(4), Utah Code.

3. A default of a respondent shall not be construed to deprive the Employer's Reinsurance Fund or Uninsured Employers'

Fund of any appropriate defenses.

4. The defaulted party may file a motion to set aside the default under the procedures set forth in Section 63-46b-11(3), Utah Code. The Adjudication Division shall set aside defaults upon written and signed stipulation of all parties to the action.

E. Waiver of Hearing.

1. The parties may, with the approval of the administrative law judge, waive their right to a hearing and enter into a stipulated set of facts, which may be submitted to the administrative law judge. The administrative law judge may use the stipulated facts, medical records and evidence in the record to make a final determination of liability or refer the matter to a Medical Panel for consideration of the medical issues pursuant to R602-2-2.

2. Stipulated facts shall include sufficient facts to address all the issues raised in the Application for Hearing and answer.

3. In cases where Medical Panel review is required, the administrative law judge may forward the evidence in the record, including but not limited to, medical records, fact stipulations, radiographs and deposition transcripts, to a medical panel for assistance in resolving the medical issues.

F. Discovery.

1. Upon filing the answer, the respondent and the petitioner may commence discovery. Discovery allowed under this rule may include interrogatories, requests for production of documents, depositions, and medical examinations. Discovery shall not include requests for admissions. Appropriate discovery under this rule shall focus on matters relevant to the claims and defenses at issue in the case. All discovery requests are deemed continuing and shall be promptly supplemented by the responding party as information comes available.

2. Without leave of the administrative law judge, or written stipulation, any party may serve upon any other party written interrogatories, not exceeding 25 in number, including all discrete subparts, to be answered by the party served. The frequency or extent of use of interrogatories, requests for production of documents, medical examinations and/or depositions shall be limited by the administrative law judge if it is determined that:

a. The discovery sought is unreasonably cumulative or duplicative, or is obtainable from another source that is more convenient, less burdensome, or less expensive;

b. The party seeking discovery has had ample opportunity by discovery in the action to obtain the discovery sought; or

c. The discovery is unduly burdensome or expensive, taking into account the needs of the case, the amount in controversy, limitations on the parties' resources, and the importance of the issues at stake in the adjudication.

3. Upon reasonable notice, the respondent may require the petitioner to submit to a medical examination by a physician of the respondent's choice.

4. All parties may conduct depositions pursuant to the Utah Rules of Civil Procedure and Section 34A-1-308, Utah Code.

5. Requests for production of documents are allowed, but limited to matters relevant to the claims and defenses at issue in the case, and shall not include requests for documents provided with the petitioner's Application for Hearing, nor the respondents' answer.

6. Parties shall diligently pursue discovery so as not to delay the adjudication of the claim. If a hearing has been scheduled, discovery motions shall be filed no later than 45 days prior to the hearing unless leave of the administrative law judge is obtained.

7. Discovery motions shall contain copies of all relevant documents pertaining to the discovery at issue, such as mailing certificates and follow up requests for discovery. The responding party shall have 10 days from the date the discovery motion is mailed to file a response to the discovery motion.

8. Parties conducting discovery under this rule shall maintain mailing certificates and follow up letters regarding discovery to submit in the event Division intervention is necessary to complete discovery. Discovery documents shall not be filed with the Division at the time they are forwarded to opposing parties.

9. Any party who fails to obey an administrative law judge's discovery order shall be subject to the sanctions available under Rule 37, Utah Rules of Civil Procedure.

G. Subpoenas.

1. Commission subpoena forms shall be used in all discovery proceedings to compel the attendance of witnesses. All subpoenas shall be signed by the administrative law judge assigned to the case, or the duty judge where the assigned judge is not available. Subpoenas to compel the attendance of witnesses shall be served at least 14 days prior to the hearing consistent with Utah Rule of Civil Procedure 45. Witness fees and mileage shall be paid by the party which subpoenas the witness.

2. A subpoena to produce records shall be served on the holder of the record at least 14 days prior to the date specified in the subpoena as provided in Utah Rule of Civil Procedure 45. All fees associated with the production of documents shall be paid by the party which subpoenas the record.

H. Medical Records Exhibit.

1. The parties are expected to exchange medical records during the discovery period.

2. Petitioner shall submit all relevant medical records contained in his/her possession to the respondent for the preparation of a joint medical records exhibit at least twenty (20) working days prior to the scheduled hearing.

3. The respondent shall prepare a joint medical record exhibit containing all relevant medical records. The medical record exhibit shall include all relevant treatment records that tend to prove or disprove a fact in issue. Hospital nurses' notes, duplicate materials, and other non-relevant materials need

not be included in the medical record exhibit.

4. The medical records shall be indexed, paginated, arranged by medical care provider in chronological order and bound.

5. The medical record exhibit prepared by the respondent shall be delivered to the Division and the petitioner or petitioner's counsel at least ten (10) working days prior to the hearing. Late-filed medical records may or may not be admitted at the discretion of the administrative law judge by stipulation or for good cause shown.

6. The administrative law judge may require the respondent to submit an additional copy of the joint medical record exhibit in cases referred to a medical panel.

7. The petitioner is responsible to obtain radiographs and diagnostic films for review by the medical panel. The administrative law judge shall issue subpoenas where necessary to obtain radiology films.

I. Hearing.

1. Notices of hearing shall be mailed to the addresses of record of the parties. The parties shall provide current addresses to the Division for receipt of notices or risk the entry of default and loss of the opportunity to participate at the hearing.

2. Judgment may be entered without a hearing after default is entered or upon stipulation and waiver of a hearing by the parties.

3. No later than 45 days prior to the scheduled hearing, all parties shall file a signed pretrial disclosure form that identifies: (1) fact witnesses the parties actually intend to call at the hearing; (2) expert witnesses the parties actually intend to call at the hearing; (3) language translator the parties intend to use at the hearing; (4) exhibits, including reports, the parties intend to offer in evidence at the hearing; (5) the specific benefits or relief claimed by the petitioner; (6) the specific defenses that the respondent actually intends to litigate; (7) whether, or not, a party anticipates that the case will take more than four hours of hearing time; (8) the job categories or titles the respondents claim the petitioner is capable of performing if the claim is for permanent total disability, and; (9) any other issues that the parties intend to ask the administrative law judge to adjudicate. The administrative law judge may exclude witnesses, exhibits, evidence, claims, or defenses as appropriate of any party who fails to timely file a signed pre-trial disclosure form as set forth above. The parties shall supplement the pre-trial disclosure form with information that newly becomes available after filing the original form. The pre-trial disclosure form does not replace other discovery allowed under these rules.

4. If the petitioner requires the services of language translation during the hearing, the petitioner has the obligation of providing a person who can translate between the petitioner's native language and English during the hearing. If the

respondents are dissatisfied with the proposed translator identified by the petitioner, the respondents may provide a qualified translator for the hearing at the respondent's expense.

5. The petitioner shall appear at the hearing prepared to outline the benefits sought, such as the periods for which compensation and medical benefits are sought, the amounts of unpaid medical bills, and a permanent partial disability rating, if applicable. If mileage reimbursement for travel to receive medical care is sought, the petitioner shall bring documentation of mileage, including the dates, the medical provider seen and the total mileage.

6. The respondent shall appear at the hearing prepared to address the merits of the petitioner's claim and provide evidence to support any defenses timely raised.

7. Parties are expected to be prepared to present their evidence on the date the hearing is scheduled. Requests for continuances may be granted or denied at the discretion of the administrative law judge for good cause shown. Lack of diligence in preparing for the hearing shall not constitute good cause for a continuance.

8. Subject to the continuing jurisdiction of the Labor Commission, the evidentiary record shall be deemed closed at the conclusion of the hearing, and no additional evidence will be accepted without leave of the administrative law judge.

J. Motions-Time to Respond.

Responses to all motions other than discovery motions shall be filed within ten (10) days from the date the motion was filed with the Division. Reply memoranda shall be filed within seven (7) days from the date a response was filed with the Division.

K. Notices.

1. Orders and notices mailed by the Division to the last address of record provided by a party are deemed served on that party.

2. Where an attorney appears on behalf of a party, notice of an action by the Division served on the attorney is considered notice to the party represented by the attorney.

L. Form of Decisions.

Decisions of the presiding officer in any adjudicative proceeding shall be issued in accordance with the provisions of Section 63-46b-5 or 63-46b-10, Utah Code.

M. Motions for Review.

1. Any party to an adjudicative proceeding may obtain review of an Order issued by an Administrative Law Judge by filing a written request for review with the Adjudication Division in accordance with the provisions of Section 63-46b-12 and Section 34A-1-303, Utah Code. Unless a request for review is properly filed, the Administrative Law Judge's Order is the final order of the Commission. If a request for review is filed, other parties to the adjudicative proceeding may file a response within 20 calendar days of the date the request for review was filed. Thereafter the Administrative Law Judge shall:

a. Reopen the case and enter a Supplemental Order after

holding such further hearing and receiving such further evidence as may be deemed necessary;

b. Amend or modify the prior Order by a Supplemental Order; or

c. Refer the entire case for review under Section 34A-2-801, Utah Code.

2. If the Administrative Law Judge enters a Supplemental Order, as provided in this subsection, it shall be final unless a request for review of the same is filed.

N. Procedural Rules.

In formal adjudicative proceedings, the Division shall generally follow the Utah Rules of Civil Procedure regarding discovery and the issuance of subpoenas, except as the Utah Rules of Civil Procedure are modified by the express provisions of Section 34A-2-802, Utah Code or as may be otherwise modified by these rules.

O. Requests for Reconsideration and Petitions for Judicial Review.

A request for reconsideration of an Order on Motion for Review may be allowed and shall be governed by the provisions of Section 63-46b-13, Utah Code. Any petition for judicial review of final agency action shall be governed by the provisions of Section 63-46b-14, Utah Code.

KEY: workers' compensation, administrative procedure, hearings, settlement

January 15, 2002 34A-1-301 et seq.

Notice of Continuation November 24, 1997 63-46b-1 et seq.